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editorial

Uncle Jean's suicide solution

by Lyle Stewart

Many people think of former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien fondly, as the slightly embarrassing aging uncle who means well, but from time to time gleefully puts his foot in his mouth.

Asked once about the liberal use of pepper spray on peaceful protesters, he responded, "Me, da pepper, I put it on my plate!"

Not so funny are his recent comments about the suicide epidemic in Attawapiskat and other First Nations communities across Canada. Asked recently whether Attawapiskat's location and isolation from social services means the community should be moved, Chrétien responded, "People have to move sometimes. Sometimes it's desirable to stay if they want to stay, but it's not always possible."

He shied away from saying whole communities should be uprooted from their ancestral lands, but the implication was clear. Even if Canada spends far less per capita on education, health and other social services in First Nations communities than for non-Natives, it's not worth bothering trying to do more.

The former Indian Affairs minister clearly wasn't being malicious. But his comments reflect a lot of mainstream thinking in this country.

National Post columnist John Robson pompously ridiculed the emergency effort to send social workers to Attawapiskat.

"Sending counsellors is not an isolated fatuity," he wrote. "It is part and parcel of a denial of reality here, spending real money and investing real hope in the idea that the problem in Attawapiskat is people's irrational negativity about their circumstances, rather than their actual circumstances."

Talk about failing to see the forest because of all those trees. Why waste more money trying to stop Native kids from killing themselves? Northern Aboriginal communities are hellholes, the thinking goes, so let them move south and, dammit, get a job!

It's the same colonialist mindset that created the "Indian reserve," often in awful locations. The intention was that they would whither away, and Native people would assimilate into the mainstream – the goal of the Indian Act in the first place.

What Robson and others fail, or refuse, to see is that this assimilationist ideology is at the root of the crisis we see today. Trying to "kill the Indian" in the Indian in residential schools. Ensuring First Nations would not benefit from the resources of their traditional territories. Clearcutting their lands, poisoning rivers with mine waste, abducting children through racist adoption and foster parent programs – it's like cutting off a person's leg and them blaming them for not running fast enough.

In 1969, when Jean Chrétien was Minister of Indian Affairs, his Liberal government produced a white paper on the Indian Act suggesting it be abolished and First Nations people integrated with the rest of Canadian society. During the same time, Chrétien received warnings about the abuses at St. Anne's Residential School in Ontario, where many children from Attawapiskat were sent, and which featured the notorious electric chair used to torture them. The warnings were ignored.

How soon we forget. Nonetheless, Chrétien is essentially suggesting the same solution for First Nations people as his government did back in the day.

Pack up, forego the meagre benefits of living on the reserve, and move south. Where, of course, there are high-paying jobs available with affordable housing in nice neighbourhoods. Right? It's not like Canada's inner cities offer drug abuse, grinding poverty and high suicide rates… do they?

Contents

EDITORIAL

Uncle Jean's suicide solution 3

REZ NOTES

Habs 0 - Hunters 1 4

NEWS

Out in the wilderness 5
Mending economic relations 7

FEATURES

Terror games 10
Love and respect 15
Back in town 19
Suicide solutions 22
Health democracy 25
Lessons from Lac-Simon 28
Building bridges 32

UTNS

Action needed to foster hope in First Nations 34

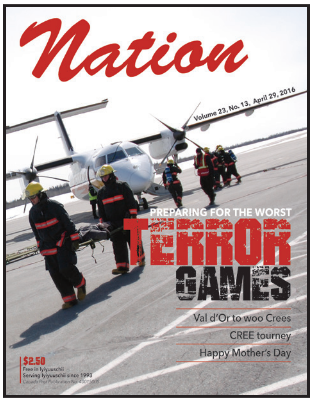

Photo provided by
Will Nicholls

rez notes

Habs 0 - Hunters 1

by Sonny Orr

Ahhh. Finally a warm south wind. The sun is out and birds are chirping. The sounds of nature fill the air, streams dash through the streets… and into my back yard. What? I check to see if my little scrap shack is okay to work in only to find that water from today’s six-hour meltdown had created a sizeable pond. A nice looking pond too. I should have put up some decoys just to see if they would work on the now legendary urban goose.

Urbanus anser capitalia, the name for the newly labelled Canada goose in quick Latin, resides in town parks, along riversides, or on local golf courses. Basically, any place with grass is the home of the urban goose. In this environment, the goose is considered a pest, right up there with crows and seagulls. Seagulls, however, have a hefty fine attached if you happened to kill one, unlike the urban goose, whose flesh is considered incredibly scrumptious to our people.

The urban goose means business. No hillbilly fowl here. In fact, the urban goose is so smart he can populate entire farms and devastate their cornfields; thereby increasing the price of popcorn at concession stands in every movie theatre in North America. Of course, this doesn’t really affect us, as much as we like to watch movies on Netflix.

This year a number of urban hunters will most likely be staying out all day feeling that primal urge to provide food for their loved ones. This urge has overridden their hockey obsessions, turning this goose season into a highly competitive quest for the fabled goose. If you analyze the amount of time sacrificed to watching hockey over hunting geese, you can probably correlate the number of flocks that flew by unscathed to the decrease in the annual catch.

This year will promise more time for hunting without interruption and thus, increase the chances of being at the blind when they fly in. Of course, bragging aside, the actual number of shots fired versus the number of missed shots will ensure that this will be a quiet year for the aiming impaired. Yes, the inept 2016 Habs have helped create environmental havoc.

Today, there is no hiding from the brazen urban goose, whose wild side is still retained in their DNA over the cosmopolitan transformation of North America. They fiercely defend their treasured parks and territories from what they consider to be pests – humans. Yes, the human is now the goose’s pest. How dare they take over my lakes and rivers and replace it with artificial fountains and stinky waterholes they like to swim in.

Back in the day, before humans made life intolerable for all species, the water fowl and birds of the world flew in flocks so large they blocked the sun for days. T poles would be erected and the birds would fall to the ground unconscious or dead after smashing into them. It was just a matter of picking up the harvest before it got too high to reach. Those days are long gone.

After the gun was introduced, overharvesting decimated the great flocks. Fortunately, the

Whose land is it?

Eeyou Istchee land claim irks Ontario First Nations

by Akiva Levitas

Since the Cree Nation Government (CNG) launched their land claim lawsuit in Ontario Superior Court earlier this year they have come up against growing opposition from Ontario First Nations.

Most recently, the Taykwa Tagamou First Nation, sought legal counsel over what they claim to be the infringement of the Quebec Cree over their territory. The Taykwa Tagamou join forces with the Moose Cree and the Anishinabe First Nations of Wahgoshig and Abitibiwinni.

Despite the mounting opposition, the Quebec CNG is sticking to its claim over the disputed 48,000 square kilometres of land. Much of the disagreement is due to the legal ramifications of shared Aboriginal title.

"The reactions are puzzling considering this court case was first launched in 1989. The move to an Ontario court seems to have touched some nerves. At the Cree Nation Government we are always open to talking with any First Nations. We're not seeking exclusive jurisdiction and title which is more along the lines of traditional governance," said Bill Namagoose, Executive Director of the Grand Council of the Crees.

"The first step is going to be to understand what the Cree of Quebec are actually seeking with this lawsuit," said Taykwa Tagamou lawyer Aaron Detlor. "What they are seeking is something called 'shared Aboriginal title.' We're not sure what they mean by that."

Although it is still early in a case that is likely to take years to resolve, a major point of contention is the validity of Treaty 9 and the possibility of renegotiating its terms.

The case has already started a discussion over Treaty 9 and the overlapping First Nations land claims in the northern Ontario region.

The main argument of the Quebec Cree is that there was no nation-to-nation consultation when the federal government dictated the division between Quebec and Ontario – thereby cutting off a portion of land that was historically used by the Quebec Cree First Nations.

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THE CREE MINERAL EXPLORATION BOARD
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SAMPLE COLLECTED FROM
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☐ Lake Side ☐ Mountain ☐ Other

SAMPLE LOCATION PLACE NAME ______________________
MAP ______________________
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CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE
DE VAL-D'OR

Mending economic relations

Val-d'Or's Chamber of Commerce reaches out to Native communities

CCVD President
Marcel Jolicoeur

by Orlando Blacksmith

The Val-d'Or Chamber of Commerce wants to mend the relationship with Aboriginal people, and recently issued a four-year action plan intended to keep First Nations money rolling into the city hit by a business downturn following last fall's crisis over allegations of police abuses.

The chamber's "Action Plan 2016-2020: An economic partnership for a better living-together" aims to encourage economic growth in Aboriginal communities and in the city, according to Marcel Jolicoeur, the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Val-d'Or (CCVD).

"It's a win-win situation," said Jolicoeur. "We want to help their business plan, to help small businesses develop on reserves. We want to better understand each other. We've been working with First Nations communities for a long time, and after what happened last autumn, we decided to issue a four-year plan of action to have a good relationship with Native people."

"The action plan is a business relationship that promotes living together," said Tanya Pash, the chief operating officer of Air Creebec. "The surrounding communities and the Cree communities are all included in this. We realized that a vacuum doesn't work in this day in age. Misconceptions about our goal must be eliminated to help our businesses and communities."

The CCVD says they will offer business training to Aboriginal people and bring them in to work in businesses in Val-d'Or as well as bring their knowledge to the communities in an attempt to help economic growth in the communities.

"Lots of strategies were discussed," said Matthew Happyjack, president of Air Creebec. "Members of the board were encouraged to study Native history to better understand us."

Pash and Happyjack are both acting as liaisons between the CCVD and the Aboriginal communities. There are many job placements and opportunities involved in this action plan, which is a great chance to gain experience in the business world.

"We want to show them how we work," said Jolicoeur. "To teach them things that could benefit the communities. Not just big businesses, but small ones, too. We want to visit each community to explain our goals. We want to be able to help others so they can help each other. We can come together to give each other something. We want to get close and support them. This is our goal."

"The CCVD wants to go to each community to see what their needs are," said Pash. "To see what has to be done. Each community has different needs and solutions. And we think the Chamber of Commerce can do that. This is beneficial to the communities and our people."

Besides bringing business professionals to communities for workshops and teachings, the CCVD aims to visit communities to find out what their needs are so that the economy can be increased on both sides, according to Jolicoeur.

"We all need to work together," he said. "This is a very good initiative for Native entrepreneurs and businessmen. Adjustments and discussions can be a good start to a great relationship that we can build together."

Department of
Justice and Correctional Services

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CREE CAVAC SERVICES

(Crime Victims Assistance Centre)

CAVAC or crime victims assistance centre, have been created to help victims overcome the physical, psychological and social consequences of a crime, and to advocate on their behalf to help them obtain compensation for the harm suffered. If you are a victim or witness to a crime then there are two Cree CAVAC offices that have been established to serve you in the Cree Nation.

CAVAC officers provide a wide range of assistance services, including:

POST-TRAUMA AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION, to assess the needs of victims of crime

INFORMATION ON THE RIGHTS CRIME VICTIMS HAVE AND THE REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO THEM, which encompasses the main stages of the judicial process

TECHNICAL SERVICES, to assist crime victims in filling out required forms

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to the winners of Ecole Wiinibekuu/
Annie Whiskeychan Memorial School
Students that participated in the following:

Public Speaking Contest Held in Whapmagoostui:	**LUKAS POLSON** Secondary 1 English 1st Place in Cree Category **TIANNA STEVENS** Secondary 4 French 2nd Place in French Category
Regional Science Fair Held in Waswanipi:	**LUKAS POLSON** **GRACE GILLIES-ERLESS** **KIMERA STEPHEN-POLSON**

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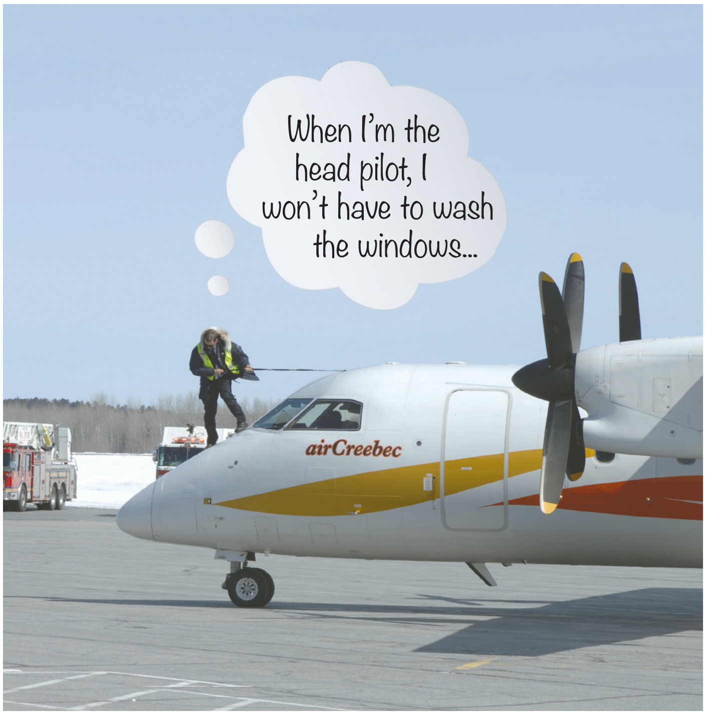
"Chief Darlene Cheechoo, Deputy Chief A. Thomas Hester, Council and Members of the Crees of the Waskaganish First Nation"

Photo: Tina Weetaltuk (Stevens)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Editorial cartoon

Birthing centres coming to Eeyou Istchee

Midwife birthing centres are on their way to various Cree communities.

Mistissini, Chisasibi and Waskaganish are all going to see the implementation of a safe place for women to give birth on reserve.

This a significant advance for remote northern communities that lack the resources to safely deliver children. Doctors are scarce and professional help is lacking in certain situations.

Most First Nations mothers have to give birth in hospitals outside their community, whereas some of the Elders remember their siblings and their children being born at home. Some women still have to fly out for two to four weeks before their due date to avoid any complications.

The problem with this is that these women are separated from their friends and family during this period of physical and emotional stress. Being in the comfort of your own community and having the support of your loved ones is huge during times like this. This is why the arrival of birthing centres is so important.

Years of planning have gone into making this happen, and while the details have yet to be announced, many already see this as a very positive move for Eeyou Istchee.

Beaded hood returns to Cree Nation

On April 18, a Cree beaded hood estimated to date back to the year 1850 was returned to Eeyou Istchee for a year-long stay at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute (ACCI) in Oujé-Bougoumou.

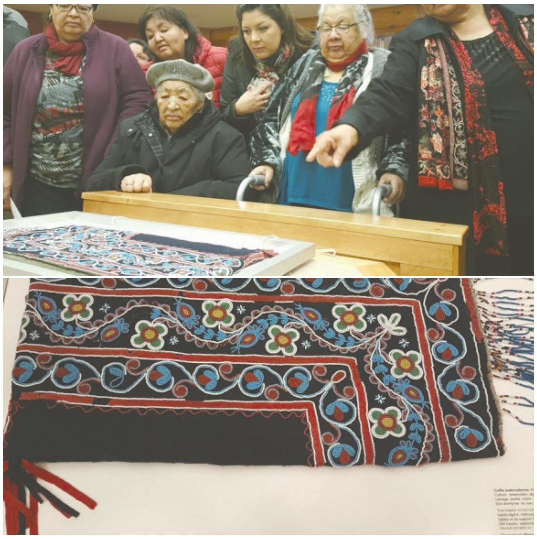
According to ACCI executive director Sarah Pash, beaded hoods had important ceremonial significance and were worn by females on special occasions such as marriage, changing of camps or the return of an important hunt. Cree women were specifically chosen to wear these beaded hoods and would have traditional knowledge and teachings passed on to them as well.

"They had a deep ceremonial value and were an important part of Cree tradition and community life," said Pash.

Discovered by ACCI researchers at the Musée de Lachine in Montreal, the hood was part of a private collection acquired by the museum in 1948. It needed restoration from mite damage before it could be publicly displayed.

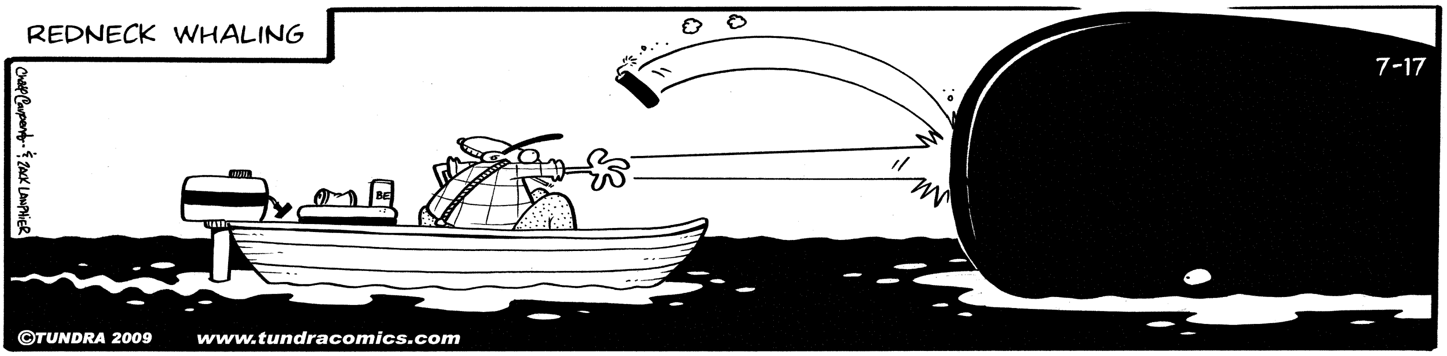
After spending 65 years in the Montreal museum it was reunited with Jane Gunner's granddaughter Trifona Simard and her great-granddaughter Dinah in a touching ceremony. The hood will be displayed at the ACCI for six months before researchers at the institute spend six months studying the artefact.

"It's like meeting my Gookum," Dinah Simard said at the unveiling. "This is how I feel when I see it."



Dina Simard (far left) & Trifona Simard (second from right)

Congratulations to the Sabtuan Regional Vocational Training Centre in Waswanipi who celebrated their ten year anniversary on Thursday, April 21st.



TERROR GAMES

A training exercise at Val-d'Or airport tests first responders' reaction to a terror incident

by Will Nicholls

Val-d'Or is one of the last places one might expect a terrorist attack. So imagine the initial panic when a local 911 operator answered a frantic call April 9 about a bomb on an Air Creebec aircraft.

The caller quickly explained that the warning was part of a training simulation, but the adrenaline must have already been flowing. Calls then went out to the Surête du Québec, Val-d'Or fire department and other emergency services. At this point, only the supervisors of the various first responders knew that the event was in fact a training exercise designed to test their reactions and readiness.

It wasn't until units arrived at the airport that most responders found out it was a simulation. The realization would have come as a relief, especially since Val-d'Or doesn't have a dedicated bomb squad, let alone a terrorist-response unit. Not many will easily forget the experience, though. More than 20 passengers on the Air Creebec plane wore realistic make-up to simulate various injuries. Triage would be needed to determine the order of medical assistance.

The "victims" included student ambulance technicians in full make-up with various injuries. Meanwhile, the would-be terrorist in the scenario

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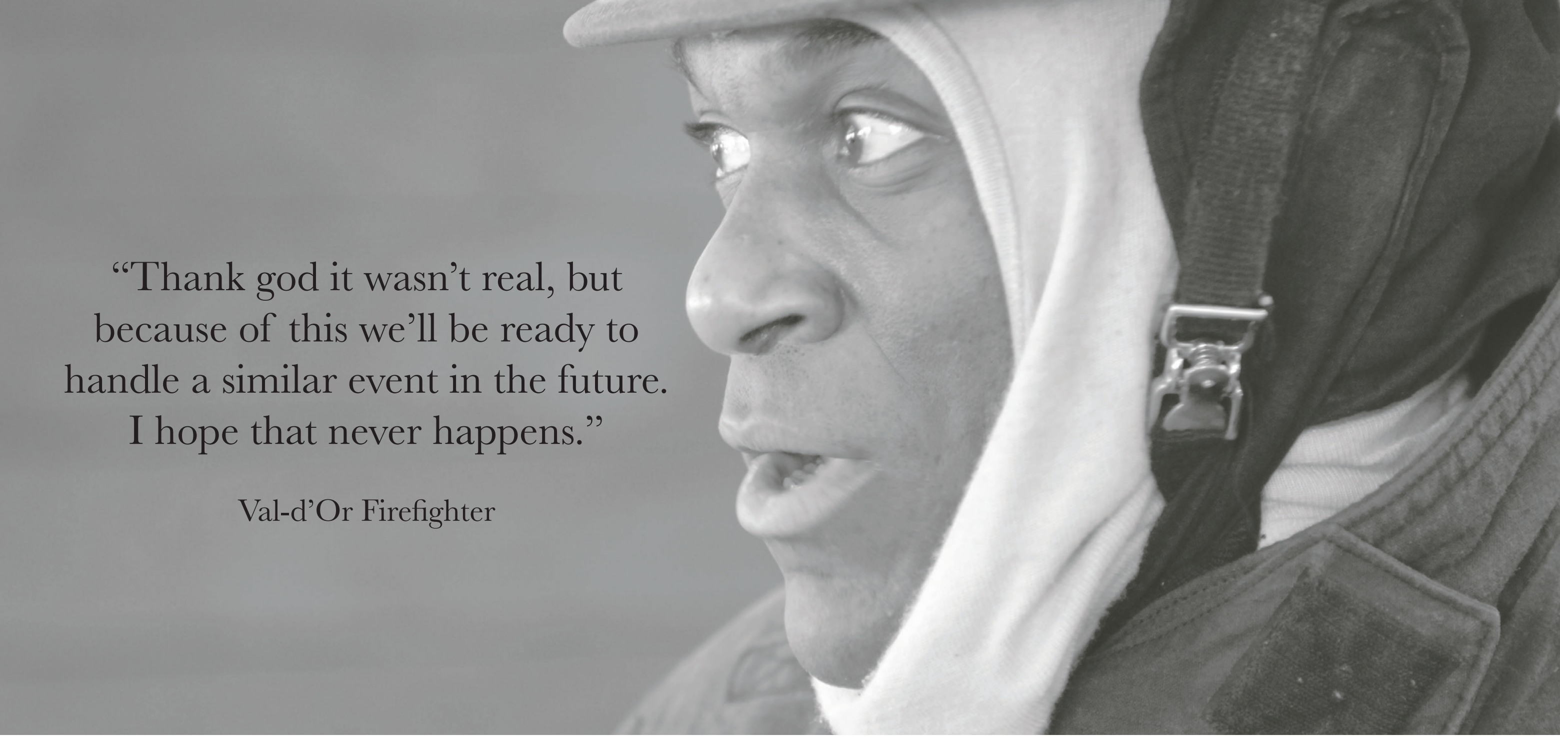

“Thank god it wasn’t real, but because of this we’ll be ready to handle a similar event in the future. I hope that never happens.”

Val-d’Or Firefighter

photos by Will Nicholls and Gaston Cooper

was a female passenger. She put up a vigorous fight that exhausted both an SQ officer and a Val-d’Or firefighter, who later told the Nation he enjoyed the exercise.

“Thank god it wasn’t real, but because of this we’ll be ready to handle a similar event in the future. I hope that never happens,” he said.

Air Creebec spokesperson Tanya Pash said the airline conducts frequent exercises to prepare flight crews and staff for a variety of emergency situations. In this case the Val-d’Or airport had an emergency response plan they wished to test and asked Air Creebec to participate.

“Safety first,” Pash emphasized. “We have one each year and we decided to integrate the two. It’s a full-scale response so it’s going to be good for the Air Creebec staff to have contact and see what it’s like when the emergency responders come in. It’s a test practice for us because if there ever was an incident we need to know how to react. Obviously we’re not expecting one but prevention is the key.”

Pash said this is the first time in years that an aircraft was used in an emergency response training exercise in Val-d’Or. Past events were complete with smoke. “So we’re going back to a hands-on approach to improve the safety and get staff familiar

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with some of the situations they may encounter," said Pash.

Few people knew what was really happening. "Only the supervisors knew," said Pash. "We had the SQ participating, the fire department, ambulance and airport security. Only one person in each knew. I advised Transport Canada we are doing a simulation in case they got a call."

Police blocked access roads to the airport, while the fire department gained experience hooking up to the water supply at the airport, which uses a different system than in the city of Val-d'Or.

"They want to get their people to practice that as well," Pash said. "So it's full scale and we're happy to be cooperating with all first responders on this. It's going to be good not only for the community of Val-d'Or but the Cree communities as well because we have hands-on practice."

Air Creebec President Matthew Happyjack was satisfied with his employees' response to the fictional emergency. "Our plane and crew were involved

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in this exercise. In the simulation at least 20 passengers were injured and with all the responders there was a lot of movement for this exercise. The airport manager said over 100 responders were involved," said Happyjack.

Happyjack said Air Creebec has its own training for flight attendants and pilots. The pilot scrambled out through the window as the flight attendants handled the situation, both in the plane and when the first responders arrived. "I'm proud of our team here at Air Creebec," he said.

Concerns

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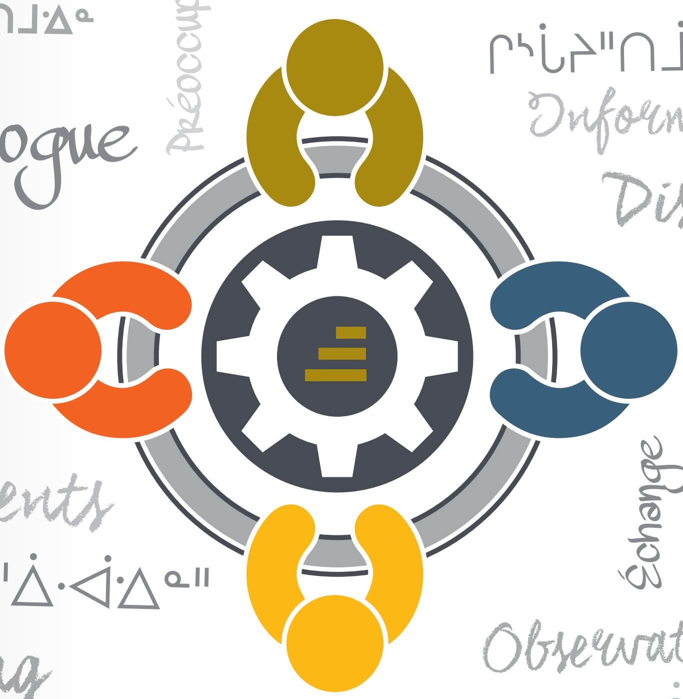

Commentaires

Comments

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Sharing

Partage

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LOVE AND RESPECT

A personal appreciation for mothers

by Melanie Angatookaluk

Being a mother is both tiring and rewarding. Tiring because all the things you have to do for your children, even if they're old enough to do it themselves. You feel like you want to do it for them, not out of duty but for the love that you have for them.

A mother pushes herself to make her children comfortable and to make sure they are well fed and loved. The reward you get is when your children turn to you for comfort or advice. But the biggest reward is when your children give you a hug and a kiss and say they love you.

Certainly there are days when you feel like pulling out your hair because you keep repeating what you may want them to do or they take their time doing their chores, but that's to be expected when you have children. More than a few times, I will take a good look at both my children and grandchildren. Their beautiful faces remind me of my purpose here on earth – to teach, to nurture, to guide them and most of all, being a mother to them.

A mother is so much more than the woman who gave birth to you. She's the most important person in the world. For me, my heart still soars when I know that I have made my mother proud for something I did or accomplished. I love nothing better than to make her smile and most of all to hear her say she loves me. I look to my mother for her embrace. That comfort place. To melt into her arms whenever I need comfort, a shoulder to cry on or just simply, the child in me wants

Melanie Angatookaluk (centre) with her son Chiiwatin and mother Caroline Scipio

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to forget the world and just lay my head on her chest and cry. It may not be out of sadness but relief – relief that I can still lay my head on her chest.

To those of us who still have our mothers walking on earth, please be considerate of how you treat your mother. You only get one in your lifetime. Treat her with respect. Treat her like she's supposed to be treated – as the most important woman in your life. Many don't have that and yearn to have their mother by their side, even for just one more day. I cannot imagine life without my mother. I don't know what I would do without her.

The person with the most impact on a child's life is the mother. A child will look to their mother for the basics of life but there's a deeper side. It's the bond between mother and child – a love so strong and a connection so deep that no one can ever replace it. All a child needs is that one person to make everything better, and that person is the mother. When a child cries, they look to the mother for comfort. They will cry until that one person will take them into her arms and the child rests their head on the mother's chest. You can hear the relief when the child takes that deep breath because they know mama will make it better just by being there to hold them.

Mothers are very special. They are the head of many households. The go-to person when you need help or advice. You look to your mother as being the strongest, smartest or bravest in the family, but she has a softer side. A side that she may conceal around the people she is supposed to be strong for. Maybe you don't know the countless times that she has cried herself to sleep because of an argument or something that happened between you and her. Maybe you don't know that she's good at hiding her tears. She'll turn away because she doesn't want you to see the fallen tears because she's supposed to be the strong one in the family.

When you ask her if she's okay, she'll most likely say she's fine. She is also scared at times, but she doesn't want to show it. She's scared she will fail as a mother. Show respect to your mother because she is proud of you every single day whether she says it or not. She doesn't ask for much, sometimes all she wants is a simple gesture to let her know that you care about her. It may not be much to you but that cup of tea you brought her or just asking if she needs anything means the world to her.

So I say, this Mother's Day, show her you care. Hold her a little longer and tighter because one day you will long to hold her one last time.

The Angatookaluk family (from left to right): Jessica, Lenora, Lee-Ann, Anita, Angeline, (front left) Waabin, Ricky holding baby Chiiwatin, Melanie and Richard

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To watch the new video, visit **www.hydloandfriends.com**

To facilitate the integration of new Cree employees, Hydro-Québec has set up a coaching program pairing Cree recruits with seasoned workers. During the annual meeting of the Cree employee integration committee, a cultural activity was held in the community of Chisasibi to teach the program's coaches about Cree culture.

Leslie Mattawashish
New employee
Hydro-Québec

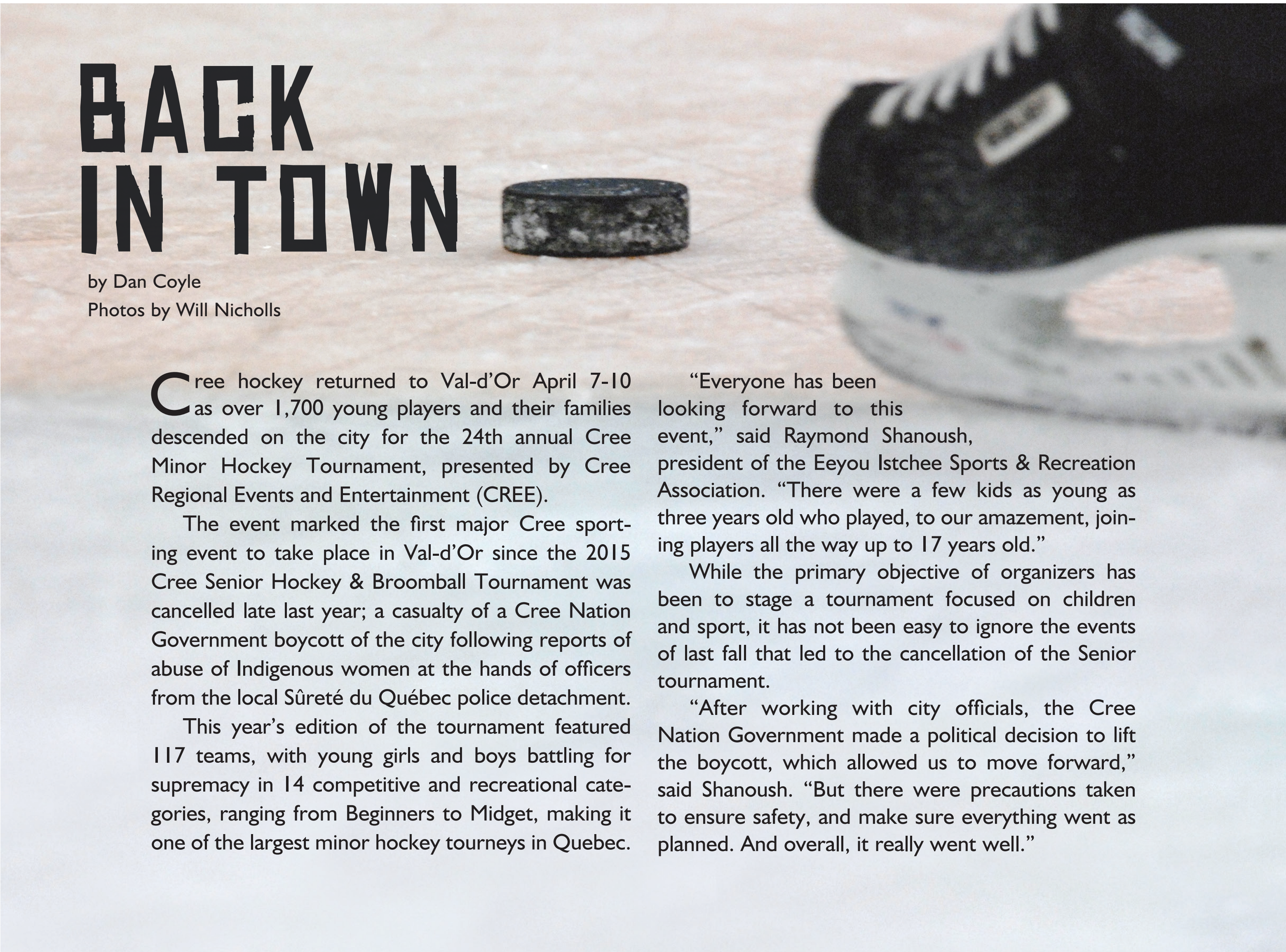
Guy Savard
Employee, coach
Hydro-Québec

Jimmy Fireman
Coordinator elders program
Chisasibi

Samuel Burskin
Craftsperson
Chisasibi

Each month, a new video will be added to www.hydloandfriends.com. To learn more, listen to the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS. Its hosts, Luke MacLeod and Luc Duquette, discuss the environmental follow-up activities related to the Eastmain-Sarcelle-Rupert Complex, as well as the concerns of land users with regard to Hydro-Québec's facilities and activities.

Next show:
Wednesday, May11, at 8:00 a.m.



BACK IN TOWN

by Dan Coyle

Photos by Will Nicholls

Cree hockey returned to Val-d'Or April 7-10 as over 1,700 young players and their families descended on the city for the 24th annual Cree Minor Hockey Tournament, presented by Cree Regional Events and Entertainment (CREE).

The event marked the first major Cree sporting event to take place in Val-d'Or since the 2015 Cree Senior Hockey & Broomball Tournament was cancelled late last year; a casualty of a Cree Nation Government boycott of the city following reports of abuse of Indigenous women at the hands of officers from the local Sûreté du Québec police detachment.

This year's edition of the tournament featured 117 teams, with young girls and boys battling for supremacy in 14 competitive and recreational categories, ranging from Beginners to Midget, making it one of the largest minor hockey tourneys in Quebec.

"Everyone has been looking forward to this event," said Raymond Shanoush, president of the Eeyou Istchee Sports & Recreation Association. "There were a few kids as young as three years old who played, to our amazement, joining players all the way up to 17 years old."

While the primary objective of organizers has been to stage a tournament focused on children and sport, it has not been easy to ignore the events of last fall that led to the cancellation of the Senior tournament.

"After working with city officials, the Cree Nation Government made a political decision to lift the boycott, which allowed us to move forward," said Shanoush. "But there were precautions taken to ensure safety, and make sure everything went as planned. And overall, it really went well."

The most significant change to this year's tournament was its sole focus on hockey.

In previous years, the tournament presented both hockey and broomball, but with a growing number of youngsters participating in both sports, plans are now in the works to stage a minor broomball tournament in Val-d'Or in October.

According to Shanoush, a significant percentage of girls are now playing both hockey and broomball, while broomball has rapidly grown in popularity among boys.

"We wanted to accommodate the girls who play hockey, and at the same time introduce a new sport to the boys," said Shanoush. "The tournament rules say you can only play one sport, which is why we split it, so the girls can play hockey at this event, and we can get as many participants enjoying both sports."

This year's tournament also featured the first Cree referee, with Byron Jonah of Waskaganish taking to the ice to work several games. A veteran of previous tournaments as a player, Jonah has worked as an official with the James Bay Minor Hockey League, and received the green light from the Val-d'Or Hockey Referees Association shortly before the start of the event.

"We have referees working as many as eight or nine games per day, and that is one of the reasons we put a limit on the number of teams," said Shanoush. "More and more, referees are committed to just being referees, instead of trying to be both a hockey player and referee. Byron has made that commitment, and is probably going to move on to referee at higher levels next year."

Then Shanoush added, "This is something that we have been pushing, to develop referees for our own events, but also for the regional championships."

In tournament action, the Lac-Simon Warriors dominated the Chisasibi Beavers in the Atom Competitive final, claiming the championship banner with an 8-1 victory, while the Oujé Wolves topped the Lac-Simon Hawks 4-3 in the Atom Recreational final.

The girls from Oujé ran the table, going undefeated in both prelim and playoff action to capture the

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Bantam Girls crown, while the Mistissini Beavers overcame a 4-2 loss to the Chisasibi Blackhawks to go undefeated in their next five contests en route to a victory in the Bantam Competitive category.

Rapid Lake surrendered only three goals in four victories to earn a berth in the Bantam Recreational Final, where they needed a pair of late goals to eke out a 4-3 win over Waswanipi.

Chisasibi was well represented in the Novice Competitive category by the Lil' Hunters, who outscored opponents by a stunning 27-1 margin in four tournament contests to take home the tournament banner.

Nigel Napash proved to be a huge difference-maker for the Lil' Hunters, tallying 11 goals to join Nathaniel Coon Come as the leading goal scorers at this year's event.

Coon Come powered Oujé to an undefeated record in Novice Recreational, but the Wolves needed to overcome a pair of one-goal deficits to post a 6-5 victory over Kitcisakik in the category final.

In PeeWee Girls action, Lac-Simon stumbled into the playoff round following a stunning 6-0 loss to Chisasibi, but showed their mettle in their final matchup with Mistissini, overcoming a 4-2 first-period deficit to claim a 6-5 overtime victory.

The Waskaganish Wings got better as the tournament progressed, overcoming an opening-game loss to the Mistissini Beavers to post four straight wins, including a 7-2 victory over Whapmagoostui in the PeeWee Competitive final, while Pikogan Maikan capped a perfect tournament run by getting past Wemindji 5-4 in overtime to take home PeeWee Recreational honours.

After winning their first three games, Lac-Simon looked poised to capture the Midget Recreation title, but the Waskaganish Jr. Wings had other plans, knocking off Lac-Simon 7-3 to earn this year's championship banner, while Wemindji and Whapmagoostui battled in the Midget Competitive final with Wemindji taking top honours.

With this year's Cree Minor Hockey Tournament now in the books, attention will turn to upcoming summer events, including the Minor Softball and Fastball Tournament at the end of July, followed by the Senior Fastball Tournament in September.

Following the first-ever Broomball Tournament in October, hockey fans can look forward to the return of one of the year's biggest events, the Cree Senior Hockey Tournament, this December in Val-d'Or.

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9

Suicide Solutions

Crisis in Attawapiskat focuses national attention on beleaguered Cree community

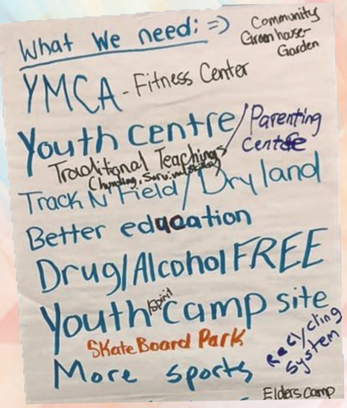
by Peter Wheeland

Photos provided by Charlie Angus

Attawapiskat housing

Suicide and attempted suicides have long plagued First Nations communities, where suicide rates can be two to 12 times higher than the Canadian average. A recent wave of suicide attempts in the Cree community of Attawapiskat – more than 100 in the last seven months in a community of just 2,000 – has once more brought the issue to international attention, and prompted the Canadian Parliament to hold an emergency debate April 12.

Charlie Angus, the NDP MP for Timmins–James Bay and his party's Indigenous and Northern Affairs critic, told the Nation that the situation is "a national crisis and an international disgrace," requiring immediate action from Ottawa.



Needs outlined by local youth

On April 18, Angus flew to the western James Bay community with federal Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett, where they joined Attawapiskat Chief Bruce Shisheesh in a private two-hour talk with a recently formed youth council.

After the meeting, Bennett announced the federal government would fund a youth centre – and its programming – requested by young Attawapiskat residents.

"What I really found moving was the incredible determination of the young people who had come together and formed a council in a very traumatic period to try to map a way out and a way forward," Angus said.

Angus sees the government's commitment as a positive step, but noted in Parliament that Ottawa has ignored the recommendations of numerous inquiries into the conditions in First Nations communities over the years.

"There are a few things that have to change immediately, and these are big, substantive changes that have to happen," he said, noting that despite the Liberals' public response to the crisis, no new money was set aside for Indigenous mental-health services in the government's recent budget.

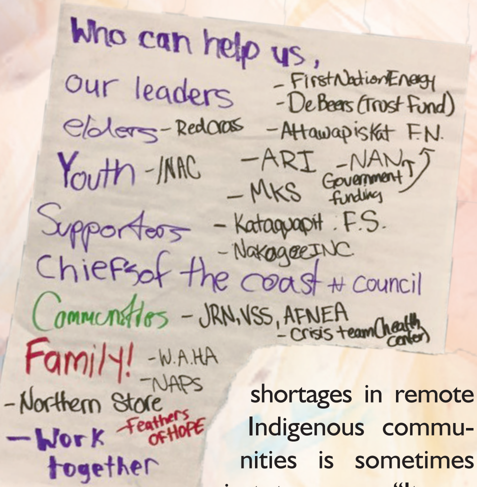
"People are dying. People are dying all the time in Treaty 9 (territory) and across the north," added Angus, whose riding includes Attawapiskat.

"We can't just put a band-aid on it and say, 'We'll have a youth centre.' If we don't have mental-health support and counselling, these crises will continue and they will continue to spiral because we don't have the ability to stabilize young people, work with them and heal them … to give them a chance."

Angus says Trudeau, whose government has put a very positive face on its plans to address Indigenous concerns, needs to "stand up and say, 'We'll augment the budget, we'll put the health dollars in to get the mental health wellness teams in the communities.' This has to happen."

Unwelcome return

Former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien suggested recently that the solution to problems like poverty, unemployment and housing



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Supporters - Kataquapit. F.S.
- NakogeeINC
Chiefs of the coast + council
Communities - JRN, VSS, AFNEA
- Crisis team (health center)
Family! - W.A.HA
- NAPS
- Northern Store
- Work together
- Feathers OF HOPE

shortages in remote Indigenous communities is sometimes just to move. "It was extremely difficult at that time," he said, referring to communities in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan when he was Indian Affairs minister. "It's difficult, there was no economic base there for having jobs and so on, and sometimes they have to move like anybody else."

The comments angered several MPs, including Angus. "In Indigenous country, people know Jean Chrétien as the guy with the White Paper," he said, summarizing the government policy under Chrétien as "deny them services and they'll assimilate. His latest comments explain the White Paper very succinctly."

The 1969 White Paper, which would have abolished the Indian Act, was abandoned after widespread opposition from Indigenous groups.

"Since he was Indian Affairs minister 50 years ago, how many young people have we lost while he's telling people to be patient and, if you don't like it, leave?" asked Angus. "Tell everyone to move, as if that's some kind of national vision."

In the House of Commons April 12, Angus told MPs that "the days of Indian Affairs and Health Canada dictating to (First Nations communities) how the resources are going to be spent, that is a failed model and it has to end."

Housing an urgent problem

Aside from a pressing need for permanent health services, housing remains a key issue for the well being of First Nations communities in the north, Angus noted.

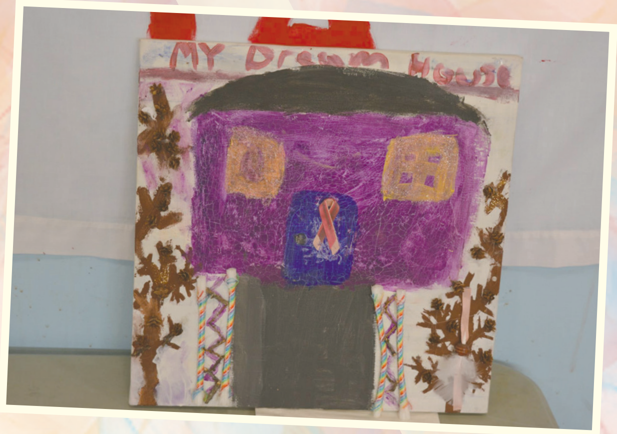
"We need to look at the kind of housing that's being built. We need to start thinking outside the box. There are incredible models out there of sustainable housing, but Indian Affairs housing tends to be poorly constructed and starts to fall apart, so we're always playing catch-up."

That didn't stop Ottawa from "demonizing" the Attawapiskat community in 2012, when they declared a housing crisis. "All they were asking was to get people out of tents in -45° conditions."

With renewed attention on Attawapiskat, Angus says Indigenous communities "now have a commitment to look at the housing crisis and get some solutions." But he adds, "The government has earmarked money to respond to the housing crisis, but we know it's completely insufficient. How are you going to build hope in communities where people are living in tents and shacks?"

In the longer term, Angus says if Native communities are to have any hope, "we need to stop designing programs in Ottawa, making the communities fit the criteria of Ottawa. We have great mental-health teams and organizations that are ready to move forward with their plans. We need to start working on solutions that work within the communities and within the culture."

MP Charlie Angus meets with young people from Attawapiskat



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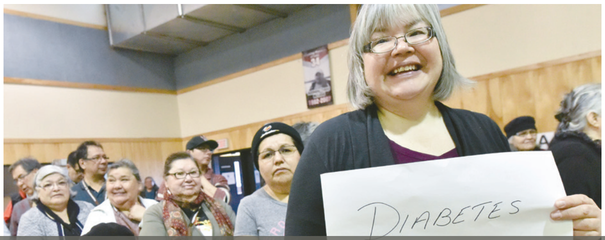
Health democracy

Regional health and social services assembly defines priorities for Eeyou Istchee

by Orlando Blacksmith
Photos by Tatiana Philip

The recent meeting on health and social services in Waskaganish proposed a novel method of determining the agenda for the three-day conference. Participants in the 2016 Eeyou/Eenou Regional General Assembly on Health and Social Services: Planning The Future of Miyupimaatisiiun Together were given the opportunity to vote for what they thought was the most important topic to tackle during three days of discussions.



“To listen to what the people at the grassroots have to say, their mix of opinions, perspectives and solutions. We have a vision of the next eight to ten years and we think the first step is to give a voice to the people.”

Known as an open-space format, the method allowed attendees to raise social, mental and regional issues.

“The objective of the meeting was to consult widely with the Cree communities and see what needs to be changed,” said Katherine Morrow, coordinator of communications at the Cree Health Board (CHB). “To listen to what the people at the grassroots have to say, their mix of opinions, perspectives and solutions. We have a vision of the next eight to ten years and we think the first step is to give a voice to the people.”

Among the topics participants chose to address were diabetes and chronic disease, Elder care and abuse, youth protection and child development, mental health, traditional medicine and land-based healing, a regional therapy addictions centre, how to deal with

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Regional General Assembly
on Health and Social Services

drug dealers and bootleggers, and a year-round drug and alcohol treatment centre.

"We had about 30 discussions going on at once," said assembly organizer Solomon Awashish. "Participants were invited to give priorities to CHB for their next plan of action and to lead the discussion tables. Everyone was equal. Everybody got a vote on what they were more interested in talking about and it all ran very smoothly."

The Strategic Regional Plan (SRP), developed by the CHB in 2004 for a 10-year horizon, still guides the board in 2016. The SRP was created to address issues plaguing Aboriginal communities, how to mend them and how to improve quality of life for residents. The CHB now wants to update the plan, one of the major goals of the regional health general assembly.

"People brought their own concerns and decided what to talk about and where the direction of the assembly was going," said Morrow. "It's not a traditional way of organizing a general assembly. It's up to the people where to take this and what direction needs to be taken. A big reason for this meeting was for the CHB to integrate Cree issues and solutions into the communities. It was a fresh approach that we had never tried before."

An event of this size is rare for the CHB. "The next 10 years of decisions will be decided by the people," she said. "This will have a huge impact in the communities and it will give a voice to the Cree people that they might not have felt they had before. The communities know what they need."

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Lessons from Lac-Simon

The slaying of a local man by police triggers debate and a search for answers

by Joshua Grant

Debates and arguments continue to swirl around the Anishnabe Nation of Lac-Simon over what actually happened earlier this month when local police killed a community member – and how to avoid more incidents that have been all too common in the village of 900.

Sandy Tarzan Michel, 25, was struck down by a police vehicle and shot four times before succumbing to his injuries April 6. Michel was the subject of a police investigation prior to the incident after losing custody of his children. Different reports say he took to the street with a machete and was threatening local officers before being rammed by a police truck on rue Ogima as his nephews, young family members and bystanders from the community looked on in horror.

Eerily, Michel's older brother – Johnny Jr Michel-Dumont – was killed by police only a few hundred metres away on the same street in 2009.

Police reports obtained by La Presse state that officers responded to a report of Michel brandishing a weapon in the street, struck him with their patrol car in an effort to disarm him, then drew their weapons and fired after he got back to his feet and swung at the vehicle with his weapon.

Eyewitness accounts differ, however, saying that Michel was "stunned" when struck by the vehicle, "dragged for several metres" and dropped his weapon on the ground before he was shot while attempting to get back to his feet.

Lence Dumont-Cheezo and John Jr. Dumont-Cheezo, Michel's nephews, arrived on the scene as the events unfolded just down the street from Lence's home.

"They shot him directly in the head. Not in the legs or in the stomach. It's like they wanted to kill him," John Jr. told *La Presse*.

In an interview with the *Nation*, Michel's sister Tina Dumont said, "He must have dropped his weapon, he was hit by the truck. Then they shot at him right away.

BUREAUX ADMINISTRATIFS
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The Dumont-Michel family

Sandy Tarzan Michel

My brother Lence was there in the street when it happened."

For the Dumont-Michel family the loss of Sandy Michel is yet another family tragedy to endure.

"In January 2009 we lost two of my little brothers, one to suicide and one to a police shooting," said Dumont. "Now it's happened again. What are we going to say to the kids? How are we going to console them at the funeral? Some of them saw everything that happened."

In almost identical circumstances on January 31, 2009, Lac-Simon police shot Johnny Jr. Michel as he brandished a machete. Dumont said both he and Sandy were under a lot of pressure, dealing with difficult personal circumstances and sometimes turning to drugs for escape.

"[Sandy] was a hard worker and he was always there for the family, he loved his kids," Dumont said. "Maybe it was because he lost them that he went out of control."

"I really hope that we'll see some justice," she added. "It's the second time this happened to my family. I also hope that they'll re-open the investigation on my younger brother [Johnny Jr.]"

Dumont does not believe either of her siblings deserved their fate but acknowledges the role that drugs and alcohol play in these situations. She also cites a lack of experience and proper training within the local police force as another contributing factor to the two incidents.

"Drugs and alcohol are a big problem here," she said. "There's so many people selling them, and we're close to Val-d'Or which is like a mini-Montreal [in terms of drug trafficking]. If we cracked down on that there would be fewer issues – 20 to 25 years ago there was alcohol, but there were no drugs."

In the past, Dumont noted, the local Algonquin police force was able to safely neutralize potentially violent situations. "They should be equipped to do that today, using [other forms of defense] like pepper spray or batons," she suggested.

The death of Sandy Michel comes just two months after 26-year-old Lac-Simon police officer Thierry Leroux was killed while responding to a domestic dispute. A well-known local resident, Anthony Papatie, took his own life after firing on Leroux.

With three deaths in as many months, the shooting of Michel sparked uproar amongst the people of Lac-Simon. SQ forces were called in to restore order and the reactions of shock and anger lead to physical altercations and at least three arrests. When it was discovered that Lac-Simon officers had been in contact with an SQ outpost in the Vallée-de-l'Or following the scene, the investigation was handed over to the Montreal police service (SPVM) for "transparency reasons."

Lac-Simon director general Stéphane Savard said the band's role is one of intervention and future prevention, working with the Dumont-Michel family and other community members to ensure that they have the support that they need.

"Immediately following the events a crisis management team was put in place," Savard said. "First they evaluated the family members, the children who were present and then anyone else who witnessed the event. These workers are available to the family and all members of the community for two to three weeks to help them sort through their emotions. Many different families and many different members of the community are affected and it was important to intervene right away."

Asked about the tension within the community, interim Lac-Simon Chief Pamela Papatie told the Nation that the process of reconciliation and re-establishing confidence between the community and their local police force has already begun.

"We had a community meeting with the director of the SQ and a few days after the meeting you could

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already see police officers patrolling, playing hockey with our kids in the streets," Papatie said. "They're going to patrol on bikes and help us with our different sensitization efforts. We're raising awareness in our schools and with our adults about the dangers of drugs and overconsumption."

Savard added that these efforts must begin with the community, but they need to be properly financed.

"We need people to work together to help their families and each other. We need to have a holistic approach because we know it's not just one problem or one issue; all the problems we're dealing with in Lac-Simon are inter-related," he said. "At the root of the problem is a lack of financing for prevention. Our police force and other sectors like health and social services are all underfinanced."

Papatie hopes to see more Indigenous communities joining together to support efforts to improve conditions in their respective communities.

"I had a lot of messages from Cree communities after the events in February," she said. "Nemaska invited two of our teams to participate in a hockey tournament and other communities offered their support. It feels good to come back to your own community afterwards with that positive energy, knowing you're not alone. In the end, we're all one Nation."

SUICIDE
ACTION
MONTRÉAL
1 866 APPELLE

BUILDING BRIDGES

by Jesse Staniforth

A mid-day workshop on Indigenous food security and sovereignty isn't totally out of the ordinary for a CEGEP class. But on April 14, the talk delivered by Aianóhon Kaylia Marquis, Project Coordinator for Ieiénthos Akotióhkwa/Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Program (KSDPP) and Food Security Program, ended on a delicious note.

After explaining in detail the traditional Mohawk Three Sisters garden – the oldest known example of agricultural engineering in human history, using corn, beans and squashes to complement one another – students filed out into Dawson College's cafeteria area for a meal of just that. There was Three Sisters soup, wild rice, fried and baked bannock, and blueberries from Eeyou Istchee. That was a lot more than a lesson.

This was the third day of Dawson's Indigenous Awareness Days, a three-day program of events now in its third year.

"The students who came the first two years were saying, 'We have all these other cultural awareness days happening at the school. Why aren't we acknowledging Indigenous people in some way?'" explained Kahnawake's Orenda Boucher-Curotte, coordinator of Dawson's First People's Centre.

"It was a student-led initiative. The three days are about acknowledging that we're on unceded Indigenous territory and that Western institutions like Dawson, like our universities, need to incorporate more Indigenous content and cultural activities to make sure people know who Indigenous people are, where they come from, and what makes them who they are."

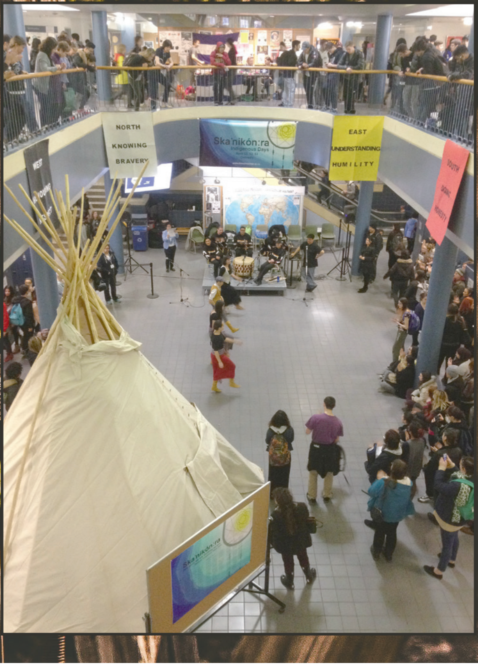
The event is about building bridges between the Indigenous members at Dawson – largely Mohawk, with some representation from Cree, Innu, Inuit and other communities – and the greater student population.

Workshops and panel discussions covered food issues, ethical research practices, hands-on practice at building Inukshuks and traditional beading. Two Inuit students – one being multiple-medalist Deseray Cumberbatch – organized a demonstration of the traditional sports involved in the Arctic Winter Games. Dancers and singers encouraged onlookers to participate in traditional songs and dances. And then there was the food – which included traditional Cree foods brought down from the Waswanipi region.

The event has a connection to Eeyou Istchee – its founding organizer was Waswanipi's Joni Saganash, who is on educational leave from her post as a Community Health Representative while she completes Dawson's Community Recreation and Leadership Training program.

The program has sent her far and wide for her fieldwork. Two years ago one of her first projects was getting the Indigenous Awareness Days off the ground, and recently she spent six weeks in Mexico meeting with Indigenous students and sharing knowledge between First Nations of the north and south

"I've been cooking here with my mom, and we've been doing a beading workshop," Joni explained over lunch with her parents John and Louise. "We made Indian tacos, bannock, blueberry jam, scone-dogs, moose and caribou. Today the Mohawks cooked, so the soup is more Mohawk. We're trying to mix all the First Nations and invite as many as possible."



Waswanipi's Saganash family adds a bit of Eeyou Istchee to Dawson College's Indigenous Awareness Days

John Saganash was responsible for the event's most visually striking element – a mitchuap/tipi with poles he brought from Waswanipi and a tarp sewn by Joni's brother, set up in the middle of the college's central atrium.

Asked about the process of building a tipi on the tile-floor of a college lobby, John looked a little frustrated.

"It's our third year, and we're starting to know what to do now. If I made it outside, the tipi would have been better. Inside, it's not too good. I asked them for a sledgehammer to put the poles in the floor!" he said with a laugh. "But if it was outside, we would have an open fire and have some geese and beaver, and storytelling."

Joni quickly pointed out that the Montreal area of Westmount's bylaws make open fires very difficult. "You have to go through all this process of asking permission," she said.

That was unfortunate, John noted, because non-Native students would get a better sense of camp life in the outdoors.

"We had to make the tipi a little smaller, but if it was outside it would have been bigger," said John. "The real smell of the bush would be outside, and that's what I tried to explain to the students. I also explained that 20 to 30 people can sleep inside."

A recent retiree after 25 years working as an electrician for Hydro-Québec, John said the students were all eager to learn more.

"When I explain what we have on the floor, how it's made, how many people, how we cook in there, there's a fire… they can't imagine it!" he laughed. "I tell them it's just like a house in -40°, once it's insulated with snow."

Events like the Indigenous Days, said Louise Saganash, are an important lifeline for Indigenous people in a city that can be too big, too loud, too bright, too weird – too unlike the real world back home.

Being away from home is something Louise knows well – she's a residential school survivor, and later took her children with her to Quebec City during her studies to teach them about city life.

"You get used to it – but you miss the cooking, and the outdoors. The outdoors here is cold in winter! It's really humid!"

But the workshops weren't just about teaching non-Indigenous students, or even just students alone. John, in fact, was sorry he had missed the Three Sisters gardening workshop, since he thinks there's a future for gardening in the inland communities of Eeyou Istchee.

"I'm interested to see if I could do it," John said. "People say you can do lots of things you couldn't do because of global warming. A non-Native friend from around Amos has her own farm where she grows tomatoes and carrots. The first year she had 35 clients. Today she has more because people are looking for local vegetables."

Louise Saganash, meanwhile, was getting ready to cook the goose feast for supper that night. As she relaxed after lunch, she reflected on her daughter Joni's success in organizing an event that keeps growing.

"The first year, it was her project," Louise said. "It was a one-day thing. Last year it was two days. Now it's three days. It's getting bigger and more people are coming."

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

by Xavier Kataquapit

Action needed to foster hope in First Nations

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Suicide has always been an issue in First Nations across Canada. The problem recently exploded with reports of a suicide pact between 11 teenagers in my home community of Attawapiskat.

There are many reasons young people in remote First Nations communities give up hope for the future. As a teen back home I often felt caught between two cultures. On one hand, I was brought up and lived a more or less traditional life. On the other hand, I was educated in a non-Native way and exposed to another world that I did not really understand. From the time I was a child I witnessed so much tragedy. There were suicides, violence, and death always seemed just around the corner. Housing was poor; there was no running water, meaning outdoor toilets and drawing drinking water from the river. That was only 25 years ago.

I was one of the more fortunate children in my community as I had a more functional family setting. My dad was a contractor and provided well for the family. My siblings and I worked for him in the family business so we were always busy. We had money and life was not so difficult. Other families had tough times with no employment, poor housing and terrible addictions. We also had our share of these issues, but not to the point where we were destitute and hopeless. My mom always provided for us. She made sure we went to school and we were fed properly.

Still, as teenagers my friends and I saw how wonderful life looked on TV for the non-Native world. People had nice cars, cool clothes, lived in beautiful houses and ate all kinds of amazing food. We all wanted some of this for ourselves. When most of us left the community to attend secondary school, we were shocked to find that we did not understand how things worked in the new world. We felt awkward, intimidated, off balance and many of us who had vowed never to drink or do drugs suddenly found ourselves on that path.

Things have improved as the community now has a secondary school. But there has never been adequate housing in Attawapiskat or many other First Nations across Canada. A population boom in recent years has resulted in cases where up to 20 people live in one house. In terms of education, First Nations have never received school funding comparable to non-Native communities, and that has resulted in a lack of resources and programming.

On the job front, the De Beers Victor Diamond Mine employs and trains many Attawapiskat residents, but many more are just not ready for the process or demands of regular work. After generations of dysfunction, abuse, neglect, addictions and hopelessness it is unrealistic to expect people to be able to immediately take advantage of opportunities. Following a healthy diet is very expensive in remote First Nations. All produce, dairy and most meat have to be either flown in by airplane or transported on the winter road and summer barge. Most people consume too much sugar, salt and processed foods. Many in the community have health problems but there is only a small hospital and no full-time doctors. The nurses and medical staff do what they can, but they are overworked and underfunded.

Things have to change. Over the past decade things took a turn for the worst as Conservative government policies led to conflict with First Nations. Now is the time for the new Liberal government of Justin Trudeau to provide real solutions. We need funding for decent housing, education, healthcare resources and meaningful programming for the youth. They need traditional teachings to connect with their past and get a sense of who they are and where they come from. They also need education on drugs and alcohol.

We have to be careful also not to allow them to do hurtful and tragic things to themselves to get attention. To use the threat of suicide to get attention is a very dangerous path. It is important to take the youth who feel hopeless seriously and intervene to make things better for them and provide hope. However, we must all take great care to make sure that our governments and leaders back up their promises of care, understanding and commitments with real action. With this kind of positive attention in their First Nation, education, lifestyle, diet and health care, the youth won't need to cry out for help in such a tragic and dangerous way.

This kind of commitment and care has been missing for a very long time. Making these efforts would give our Attawapiskat youth a reason to hope for the future.

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